



Who Lowered the Roof?

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Here at Atsugi, people who work at Public Works Transportation Maintenance routinely repair and operate forklifts in their work spaces. The building has drive-through doors, which are accessible through each side of the building. One side has large, open ceilings, and the other has lower rafters and supports (11 feet, 3 inches high). We operate smaller forklifts in this area.

But one day, we had a problem. An operator had just finished a maintenance inspection on one of the larger lifts we operate. He drove the truck down an area of the shop where the roof supports were lower, hit the support beam of the roof, and shattered it. Even with the lift all the way down, the top of this forklift extended more than 2 feet above the beam.

You may ask how something like this could happen. After all, this was a common route for an inspector to use after completing his work. However, most of these inspections were on smaller forklifts. This well-experienced operator was so used to driving the smaller ones that he didn't apply risk management to what was normally a routine operation.

This was not a reportable mishap because the operator wasn't injured, the forklift wasn't damaged,

and the cost of repairing the structure was minor. But, I wanted to tell you about it, not only to point out what not doing risk assessment can cause, but because of what doing risk assessment can prevent.

Two things kept this operator from being injured: the roof rack on the forklift and his safety helmet. Even though there is no Navywide regulation requiring an operator of a forklift to wear a safety helmet, he had one on because this base has an instruction saying that a safety helmet is mandatory during all types of operations.

If the piece of beam lodged in the roof rack of the forklift had been a little smaller and in a different location, it could have hit the operator.

In this case, some things were done wrong—our fix was to permit no forklift operations in this end of the building. I also have to give the operator a pat on the back for wearing the proper PPE for the job. ■